SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

DEMOCRATIC

GERMAN REPORT

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# TEN YEARS THAT CHANGED GERMANY

October 7th 1959 will be a red letter day for the people of the German Democratic Republic: the day on which they celebrate the tenth anniversary of the establishment of their state.

Ten years that changed Germany? Yes, certainly, for although the German Democratic Republic is only a part of Germany, the establishment of the Democratic Republic has meant a decisive break with the old Germany, the Germany of the Kaiser and Hitler.

After World War One, the Kaiser went, but the generals remained. After World War Two, Hitler went, but the generals and the big industrialists remained: but only in one part of Germany, the West German Federal Republic.

In the German Democratic Republic the generals, the big industrialists, and the Junkers have been consigned once and for all to the refuse dump of history.

When the German Democratic Republic was founded on October 7th 1949, East Germany was still near the hunger line, and the whole economy was very shaky. Today, after ten years of intensive efforts, and despite set-backs, embargos, and mistakes, it has become a prosperous well-run state, with the fifth highest industrial production in Europe, with no unemployment, and with a standard of living which will soon surpass that in most western European countries.

Even more important for Germany's neighbours is the fact that ever since its foundation the German Democratic Republic has pursued a consistent policy of peace and friendship with all peoples. The Government of the Democratic Republic has given its approval to all realistic suggestions made for a relaxation of tension in Europe: proposals such as the Rapacki Plan for an atom-free zone, the various proposals for withdrawal of all foreign troops from Germany or their reduction, and proposals for the limitation of German troops in both German states.

The German Democratic Republic has established good-neighbourly relations with states such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, which suffered so much from German militarism in the past, and is ready and anxious to establish similarly friendly relations with all other states.

Today, ten years after the establishment of the two German states, the whole world is confronted with the picture of two radically different Germanys.

In West Germany, the men who ran Hitler's war industry are still in control of industry; the generals who commanded Hitler's armies occupy all the command posts in the West German Wehrmacht, soon to be armed with nuclear weapons; the judges, the police and the politicians have been taken over from the Hitler era.

In the German Democratic Republic heavy industry has been nationalised; the land of the Junkers has been divided up amongst the peasants; the People's Army, necessary for defence purposes, is commanded by veterans of the anti-fascist fight; and the judges, the police and the political leaders are people who suffered persecution and imprisonment under Hitler.

Ten years that changed Germany? Yes, certainly, for the short history of the German Democratic Republic shows that a new and better Germany can and will be built in the whole country.

# BEFORE THE REPUBLIC WAS BORN

## East Germany from 1945 to 1949

When the Second World War ended on May 8th 1945, Germany was completely occupied by the victorious armies of the United Nations. The nazi state had been completely smashed, from central government level down to the smallest village council, and everything had to be built up again from zero.

The first few weeks were a period of improvisation. German anti-fascists, most of them released from Hitler's concentration camps and prisons, took the lead in getting things going again: clearing the rubble from the streets, getting water supplies, electricity and gas restored, and bringing food to the starving people.

On June 10th 1945 the Soviet occupation authorities licenced the formation of political parties in East Germany, the Soviet Occupation Zone. On June 11th the Communist Party of Germany published a ten-point programme for the future of Germany. Here are the ten points:

1. Complete liquidation of nazism.
2. Struggle against hunger and unemployment.
3. Restoration of democratic rights, trade unions etc.
4. Creation of democratic self-government organs up to provincial level.
5. Protection of workers against exploitation by employers.
6. Nationalisation of property of nazi officials and war criminals.
7. Expropriation of big estates.
8. Transfer of all vital public services to local administrations.
9. Good-neighbourly relations with all nations.
10. Recognition of the duty to make reparations for the damage done by Hitlerite aggression.

In the following weeks other parties were founded — the Social Democrats, Christian Democrats and Liberal Democrats — and formed with the Communists the Anti-Fascist Bloc on the basis of the ten-point programme.

On August 2nd 1945 the Potsdam Agreement of the Big Four provided the legal basis for the democratisation of Germany and the eventual creation of a German Government on a democratic and peaceful basis. The history of the following years in Germany was the history of the fulfillment of the terms of the Potsdam Agreement in East Germany, and the sabotaging of the Agreement in West Germany.

Swift steps were taken in East Germany to put the ten-point programme into effect. In Autumn 1945 the land reform was carried out.

More than 7000 big estates were broken up, and a total of over half a million poor peasants received small farms of their own.

In October 1945 the Soviet Military Administration confiscated the property of arms industrialists and nazi criminals, and workers' committees in the factories combed out nazis and war criminals in the administration of the factories. (On March 13th 1947 it was announced that 390,478 nazis had been removed from public and private office in East Germany, far more than in any other zone).

The main process of nationalisation of nazi-owned factories was completed in 1946 after a referendum in Saxony had shown 77.7% of the voters in favour of expropriation.

In April 1946 the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party united in East Germany to form the Socialist Unity Party.

In September 1946 provincial elections were held throughout East Germany, producing a clear majority for the Socialist Unity Party in all provinces.

In the following two years great progress was made in getting industry going again, cleansing the schools of nazi influences, building a staunchly anti-fascist administration and police force, etc.

Every measure to establish some form of all-German administration was frustrated by western allied refusal to abide by the terms of the Potsdam Agreement.

In June 1948 the western allies finally split Germany into two distinct economic areas by a unilateral currency reform in the western zones. When the western currency was also introduced in West Berlin, Soviet counter-measures to prevent the wrecking of the East German economy led to the so-called "Berlin Blockade". This blockade was in fact self-imposed by the western powers, since the authorities in East Germany announced their readiness to supply West Berlin with all the food, raw materials, etc. which were needed there.

Central economic planning in East Germany began in July 1948, first with a Six Month Plan, and then with the Two Year Plan 1949-50 with the target of restoring 1936 levels of production by 1950.

During this period the western powers, in cooperation with the old industrialists who had never been deprived of power in West Germany, made their plans for the formation of a separate West German state, and on May 23rd the "Basic Law for the German Federal Republic" was promulgated.

At the same time the progressive forces in both East and West Germany were giving their support to the German People's Congress, which was charged with the task of working out the constitution for a really democratic Germany on the basis of the Potsdam Agreement. The work of the German People's Congress in West Germany was greatly hampered by bans imposed by the western occupation authorities.

On September 7th 1949 the partitioning of Germany was made final when the German Federal Parliament convened for the first time in Bonn, electing Konrad Adenauer as Chancellor by a majority of one vote.

Faced with the fact that Germany had been split, the German People's Council, which had been elected by the German People's Congress, constituted itself in Berlin on October 7th 1949 as the Provisional People's Chamber of the German Democratic Republic.

The new Germany had been born.

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**On the pages which follow, GERMAN REPORT presents in condensed form a year-by-year account of the development of the German Democratic Republic, together with articles giving some details of the main aspects of life in the Republic.**

# October 7th 1949:
# A NEW GERMAN STATE

## Inaugural Address

Wilhelm Pieck on his election as President of the German Democratic Republic on October 11th 1949:

"The path we take is not easy. Great difficulties still confront our people. Many towns and villages still lie in ruins, and the sad heritage of Hitlerism is not yet banished. People still lack food and clothing, housing and everyday goods. The old people, the sick, and above all the children suffer from the shortages ...

"To fulfil our difficult task we must have the ready cooperation of everybody; this is the only way to get rid of the rubble, including the ideological rubble, left behind by Hitlerism; this is the only way we can construct a productive economy and build a happy Germany respected by the world ...

"We are fully aware of the great responsibility which the German people have for allowing and supporting the barbaric Hitlerite war; we are aware of our responsibility to make retribution to the countries ravaged by the war. We shall fulfil faithfully the commitments of the Potsdam Agreement, and hope thereby to win the confidence of the nations. To this end we must do our utmost to put an end to a state of affairs in which in West Germany the fascist and militarist forces are returning to control.

"I appeal to the people of West Germany not to allow themselves to be influenced by the campaign of hatred against the east, but to join with us in the struggle for the unity of Germany and for peace."

**President Wilhelm Pieck (left) and Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl**

**Crowds in Berlin discuss the new Republic**

## 1949

**Oct. 7th** – German Democratic Republic proclaimed in Berlin. People's Council reconstituted itself as Provisional People's Chamber, and issued proclamation stating: "The separatist Bonn Government has the task of including West Germany in the NATO military bloc, and of turning West German youth into the mercenary troops of American imperialism. In order to fulfil this task, German fascism and militarism are openly increasing in West Germany, and ideas of revenge being revived ..."

**Oct. 10th** – Soviet Military Administration dissolved, and administrative functions transferred to the Government of the GDR. A Soviet Control Commission formed to assume Soviet responsibilities in Germany.

**Oct. 11th** – Wilhelm Pieck, anti-fascist veteran, elected first President of the GDR.

**Oct. 12th** – Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl presented his first government (8 Socialist Unity Party, 4 Christian Democrats, 4 Liberal Democrats, 1 Democratic Peasant Party, 1 National Democrat, 1 non-party) to People's Chamber.

**Oct. 15th** – Soviet Union accorded diplomatic recognition to GDR, followed in next few days by Albania, Bulgaria, China, Czechoslovakia, North Korea, Poland, Rumania.

## 1950

**Feb. 15th** – Foundation stone laid for new steel plant and rolling mill in the town of Brandenburg.

**Feb. 22nd** – Government Declaration called for peace treaty with all of Germany and the withdrawal of all occupation troops.

**Mar. 27th** – 30 % price cut for a wide range of foods, textiles and other consumer goods.

**May 15th** – Joint GDR-Soviet announcement that pending war reparations shall be halved.

**May 17th** – People's Chamber reduced coming-of-age limit from 21 to 18 years.

**May 19th** – USSR returned 23 factories taken over as war reparations.

**June 5–6th** – Joint GDR-Polish declaration recognised Oder-Neisse Frontier as permanent border.

**July 15th** – Price cut for unrationed goods slashed prices 15 %–60 %.

**July 20th** – Two-Year Plan completed five months before schedule. First steel from new plant in Brandenburg.

**Sept. 27th** – Law on "protection of mother and child and women's rights" guaranteed equal pay for equal work, paid vacations before and after childbirth, equality in marriage, etc.

**Oct. 15th** – General elections to People's Chamber returned coalition list of National Front.

**Nov. 15th** – Otto Grotewohl presented new Cabinet to People's Chamber.

**Nov. 16th** – "Theatre of Friendship", first German theatre for children, opened in East Berlin.

**Nov. 30th** – Grotewohl proposed to West German Chancellor Adenauer negotiations on an all-German Constituent Council. Proposal not accepted.

# INDUSTRIAL PROGRESS

**July 24th 1950; Third Party Congress of Socialist Unity Party drafts First Five Year Plan for 1951—55 with the target of doubling industrial production.**

The first years after the war in East Germany were hard, hungry years of overcoming the chaos and destruction of the war and paying reparations for the damage the nazis had done in Europe. 162 completely destroyed plants had to be rebuilt, 1573 factories had to be reconstructed or enlarged. This difficult process was essentially ended with the successful Two Year Plan of 1949—1950 which brought production back to the 1936 level.

The young German Democratic Republic was then faced with an almost equally difficult problem; Germany was now split and almost all the heavy industry and natural resources were in West Germany.

The main task of the First Five Year Plan was to create or enlarge the rudiments of many production branches in the GDR and establish a self-supporting economy.

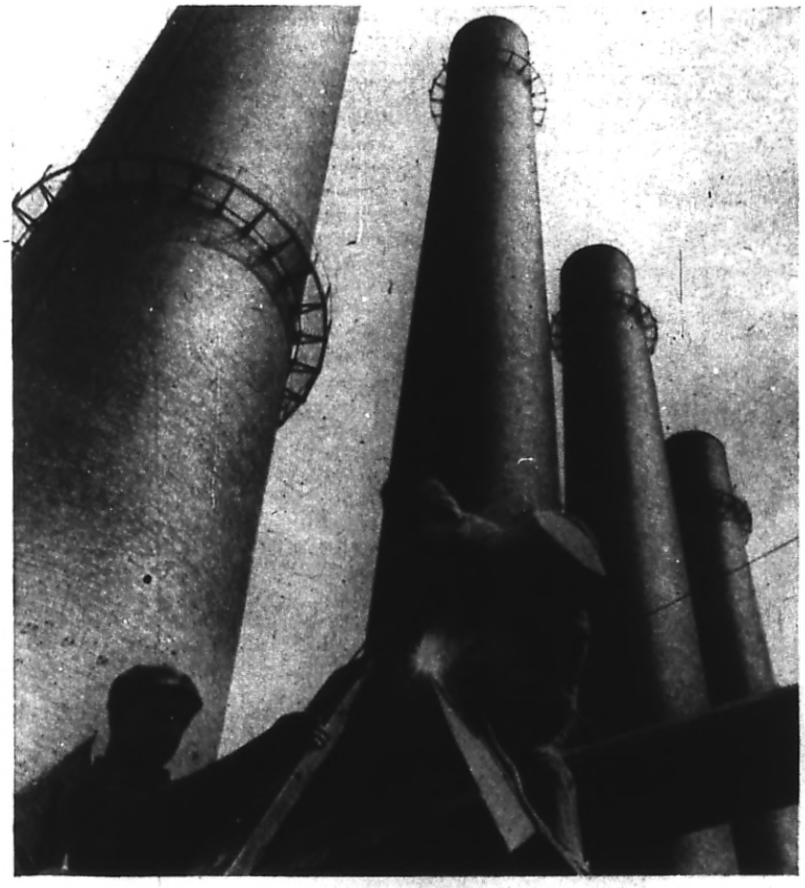
Thus, it was necessary to build 102 large and medium factories from scratch — coke and steel mills, shipyards and machinery factories.

Soon after the end of the Five Year Plan (1955), the GDR had already reached fifth place in industrial production in Europe. In per capita production, it had reached first place in the world in synthetic fiber production, fifth place in electrical energy, sixth place in chemical production. By 1958, production was 141% higher than 1950.

The next goal, envisaged in the Seven Year Plan (1959—1965), was to mechanise and rationalise production, to achieve automation in an increasing number of fields and to reach world technical standards in all fields.

A main link in this chain was the chemical industry, so necessary to both consumer and industrial production. One example is sulfuric acid: production was 245,263 tons in 1950; by 1958 it was 530,885 tons and a new plant (in Coswig), to be completed in 1960, will be the largest of its kind in the world.

All this had cost great effort and not a few sacrifices. But especially the success of the nationally-owned plants, which by 1958 accounted for 88% of production, had made the industrial progress possible, and had enabled the average wages to rise from 265 marks in 1950 to 421 marks in 1958 (with sinking prices). A 45-hour week had also been initiated in 1957, and medical, holiday, sport and cultural facilities in the factories were amongst the best in the world.



**A new cement factory nears completion**

# YOUTH

**Berlin, August 5th 1951; Two million young Germans and thousands of youth from 104 other countries met, danced, talked and celebrated at the Third World Youth Festival here.**

The festival, a highpoint in the history of the new German youth movement, symbolised attempts of the Free German Youth (FDJ) to cultivate friendship among its members for youth of other countries and overcome the chauvinist heritage inherited from Hitler.

Another example of this was the series of friendly "Three Country Gatherings" at the Czech-German-Polish borders.

There were also meetings with French and Soviet youth among others, also ever more exchanges of hostelers, and, of course, the other World Youth Festivals.

But the youth had many other important tasks as well. The first "Anti-Fascist Youth Committees" in July 1945 and the FDJ (founded March 7th 1946) had faced a country full of ruins, hunger, bitterness and cynicism. Their first job was to organise teams to clear ruins, repair homes and to encourage young people in building up a new and better life.

The FDJ sponsored conferences of young "activists" to exchange experiences in labour-saving methods and it encouraged young workers and farmers to qualify themselves for better positions and to increase their knowledge.

A problem in the FDJ was to maintain the same interest and enthusiasm amongst the new generation of young people constantly entering the organisation. This was not always easy. A tendency towards routine, with dry meetings and few activities, made itself felt.

Then the "Junge Welt", a daily newspaper for young people, sparked several campaigns to overcome this. Sport played a large role. A series of stimulating open forums began on political, cultural and moral questions. Camping facilities were increased.

New youth projects were organised — the construction of an electric power station, land amelioration projects, the extension of the East Berlin airport and the construction of a huge plant for refining petroleum.

Many problems remain for the FDJ, but already the youth of the GDR can look back on a solid row of gains and achievements. These include the lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18 (May 17th 1950), the election of a large number of young men and women to government bodies on all levels (including 29 official FDJ delegates in Parliament), guaranteed equal pay for equal work and a series of age limits and laws protecting apprentices and young people at their job.

Most important, all young people have equal chances in finding jobs fitting their capabilities, in rising in their trade and in studying at a college or university, without financial worries. Indeed, economic fear and uncertainty about finding a job are unknown to youth in the GDR.

## 1951

**Jan. 1st** – First Five Year Plan begun. Bread and vegetable rationing ended. Foundation stone laid for Iron and Steel complex on the Oder (later Stalinstadt).
**Feb. 15th** – Announcement of Plan Commission that pre-war agricultural level had been reached in 1950.
**Feb. 26th** – Rationing for most textiles ended. Price cut for textiles and other consumer goods.
**Mar. 5th** – People's Chamber appealed to four big powers for a peace treaty.
**Mar. 28th** – Friendship meeting with Polish and Czechoslovak youth in Liberec (Czechoslovakia).
**Apr. 22nd** – National Olympic Committee of GDR founded.
**July 30th** – Price cuts for more foods and consumer goods.
**Sept. 15th** – People's Chamber appeal to West German Parliament for discussions on free, all-German elections for a national assembly. Rejected.
**Sept. 19th** – First blast-furnace in new complex on Oder began production.
**Oct. 1st** – Work begun on Lauchhammer factory to produce metallurgical coke from lignite.
**Oct. 15th** – Production began in new iron works in Calbe.
**Nov. 2nd** – President Wilhelm Pieck appealed to West German President Heuss to meet him to arrange all-German talks. Refused.
**Dec. 1st** – National Front appealed to German people to oppose Adenauer's negotiations for a "General Treaty" with western powers.
**Dec. 8th** – GDR rejected UN proposal of international control for all-German elections as inconsistent with right of self-determination.
**Dec. 9th** – Price cut for foods, liquors, shoes and textiles.
**Dec. 11th** – GDR government delegation (Lothar Bolz, Friedrich Ebert) addressed UN General Assemby in Paris to oppose UN control of German domestic affairs.
**Dec. 19th** – Big hydro-electric dam completed in Sosa.

# 1952

**Jan. 2nd** – Reconstruction Programme for East Berlin launched.

**Jan. 9th** – People's Chamber approved a draft law for all-German elections and appealed to West German Parliament to discuss draft.

**Mar. 1st** – The youth newspaper "Junge Welt" ("Young World"), published by the Free German Youth organisation, became a daily.

**Mar. 10th** – The USSR proposed a German peace treaty to the three major western powers. The draft treaty proposed that Germany be restored as united state, that all occupation troops be withdrawn within one year, that human rights be guaranteed, and that frontiers conform to Potsdam Agreement.

**Mar. 14th** – People's Chamber approved Soviet peace treaty proposal.

**Apr. 29th** – The USSR handed over to the GDR 66 factories which had been producing for the USSR as part of reparations programme.

**Apr. 29th** – First ocean-going freighter made in the GDR launched in shipyards at Rostock.

**Apr. 30th–May 13th** – The Fifth "Peace Bicycle Race" from Prague to Warsaw, with 16 nations participating, passed through GDR for the first time.

**June 13th** – All parties in the GDR protested against Adenauer's signing on May 26th of the Bonn Treaties stipulating West German rearmament and permanent occupation. (Treaties later rejected by France in 1954.)

**June 14th** – The huge lignite coke plant in Lauchhammer began production.

**June 18th** – Dimitroff Museum opened in Leipzig court building where the Reichstag fire trial took place in 1933.

**July 1st–12th** – 2nd Conference of the Socialist Unity Party in Berlin decided to build socialism in the GDR (including the voluntary collectivisation of farms). The first "socialist emulation" campaign in the factories initiated by the workers in the steel rolling mills.

**July 17th** – "Wilhelm Pieck Pioneer Republic" – all-season children's camp – opened on Lake Werbellin.

**July 23rd** – Law democratising government administration passed – 5 old provinces divided into 14 counties.

**Aug. 21st–25th** – 75th German Catholic Conference in Berlin with delegates from East and West Germany.

**Sept. 19th** – People's Chamber delegation travelled to Bonn with proposals for mutual understanding. Proposals not accepted.

**Nov. 12th** – President Wilhelm Pieck pledged that the GDR would never permit another German war against France.

**Dec. 21st** – TV station in East Berlin began trial programmes.

# AGRICULTURE

**Berlin, December 6th 1952; Farm conference agreed on model rules for newly-formed agricultural production cooperatives.**

Land reform in 1946 had broken up big estates and given 544,079 peasants and agricultural labourers small farms of their own. They worked hard on their new land, but such small farms were mostly not suitable for cultivation by modern agricultural machinery.

There could be no question of returning to the old system, so there was only one realistic long-term solution — for the peasants to put their farms together and work them cooperatively. This process of collectivisation began in 1952, and was almost immediately faced with several difficulties.

Those who joined the agricultural production cooperatives (called "LPGs" in German) were often those who had little experience as farmers. Many of the early LPGs got into debt and made a poor impression on the other peasants who were becoming prosperous despite old-fashioned methods.

In addition, the machine and tractor stations, which hired machinery to both independent peasants and LPGs, had not always enough machines to make large-scale farming so clearly advantageous.

The development was therefore a slow one; many peasants strongly opposed the LPGs and resented the campaigns for new members — some still do in fact. But by 1959, most of the LPGs were establishing themselves, and in many cases had become very prosperous.

They can afford to raise cattle, hogs and poultry on a large scale, with modern stalls and milking machinery; their fields are large and easily cultivated by machine, they can work fewer hours and go on vacation, something quite new.

The machine and tractor stations had also greatly increased their machine parks in the meantime – between 1951 and 1958 the number of combines had increased from 127 to 4,078, for example.

Lastly, it had been possible for LPG farmers to advance culturally — to build clubhouses, community centres, new homes and sport parks.

More and more private peasants, after shrewdly weighing the pros and cons, have decided to join. In July 1959 there were already 395,000 LPG members farming 40% of all arable land. 59 of these cooperatives, where most or all of the villagers had joined, received their own tractors and other machinery. It will certainly not be long before a majority of peasants are in the LPG (this was already the case in 45 districts by June 1959) — this will mean modern methods and more grain, milk, meat and vegetables for everybody.

**Peasant cooperators plan the chores**

# STANDARD OF LIVING

**Berlin, October 26th 1953; Prices of meat, fats, cigarettes and beer were slashed 10—20% today.**

When the German Democratic Republic was founded in 1949 the standard of living was low. Almost everything was rationed, and the rations were not much above subsistence minimums. Off-the-ration food was legally available, but the prices were prohibitive.

Since then, life in the Republic has been marked by an almost unbroken series of ration increases, culminating in the final abolition of food rationing in 1958, coupled with price cuts and higher wages and pensions for everyone.

By 1958 the Government felt it was in a position to set a new target: to catch up with and overtake West Germany in the per capita consumption of almost all classes of consumer goods by 1961.

There will be no difficulty in catching up with West Germany in the food field: in fact, the GDR already leads in many items here — butter: GDR 26 lbs per capita, West Germany 16 lbs; sugar: GDR 66 lbs, West Germany 61 lbs; fish: GDR 28 lbs, West Germany 26 lbs. (The figures are for annual consumption.) There is some leeway to make up in meat, milk and eggs, but the gap is not large.

**A big drop in egg prices - typical of the price trend**

In some consumer goods, too, the GDR is already ahead: in cameras, bicycles and sewing machines, but there will have to be a big effort with other goods such as TV sets, refrigerators, and particularly textiles.

In basic necessities, the GDR has had a lead over West Germany for years. Rent, gas, electricity, bread and potatoes, for instance, are all much cheaper than in the western part of the country. So are tram, bus and train fares and cinema tickets.

Then there are the factors which do not show up in tables of prices, such as holidays, medical service and higher education. In the GDR, workers can spend two weeks in trade union holiday homes at the sea or in the mountains for a nominal fee amounting to between two and three days' average wages, and this low price includes room, board and free entertainments.

The all-in medical service, with better benefits than in West Germany, free higher education with stipends for all talented youngsters, maternal benefits, and so on, all help to bring the standard of living in the Democratic Republic to a higher level than it has ever been in the past in Germany.

Now that emphasis is being laid more and more on the production of high-quality consumer goods, the GDR is well on the way to becoming a very attractive "shop-window" which will show conclusively that socialism can deliver the goods, not only in the form of industrial expansion, but in making everyday life better and brighter for everyone.

## 1953

**Jan. 30th** — Foundation stone for reconstruction of the city of Rostock laid.

**Apr. 9th** — Rationing of all textiles and shoes ended.

**Apr. 20th** — Erich Weinert, famous poet and satirist, died at 62.

**May 5th** — On Karl Marx's 135th birthday, the city of Chemnitz renamed Karl Marx Stadt and Leipzig University renamed Karl Marx University.

**May 10th** — Foundation stone for the reconstruction of the city of Magdeburg laid.

**May 16th** — The GDR bicycle team won the 6th International Peace Race (Prague—Berlin—Warsaw).

**May 27th** — USSR dissolved Soviet Control Commission, named High Commissioner of the USSR in Germany, with duties limited to supervision of Potsdam agreement and relations with western powers.

**May 31st** — Foundation stone for the rebuilding of Dresden laid.

**June 11th** — Government launched "New Course" reversing recent administrative harshnesses. Ration card restrictions for certain section of middle class dropped; "refugees" to West Germany returning to GDR receive back confiscated property; relaxations for farmers and tradesmen with arrears in taxes; credits for small factories and businesses; heavy industrial programme slowed; arrests and prison sentences reviewed and many amnestied; agreement with Evangelical Church on better relations.

**June 17th** — Riots and turmoil in Berlin and several other cities. "In order to launch the provocation ... American and West German supporters of war ... utilised the discontent of part of the population resulting from our policy in the past year" stated the Socialist Unity Party. Situation restored to normal after two days.

**June 21st–25th** — More "New Course" reforms; old age and other pensions increased; housing programme stepped up, social security benefits improved, holiday homes increased.

**July 21st** — USSR sent supplementary foods and raw materials worth 1,130 million rubles.

**July 23rd** — Big wage increases for several million lower-paid workers; small business taxes cut; price cuts for tea, rice, soap, etc; fish derationed, meat ration increased.

**Aug. 6th** — Doctor's salaries increased, universities enlarged.

**Aug. 22nd** — Soviet Union cancelled GDR debt of 2500 million dollars in reparations; will return 33 big reparation factories and slash occupation costs.

**Aug. 24th** — Poland cancelled all reparation claims against GDR.

**Aug. 26th** — People's Chamber declared readiness to form provisional all-German government together with West German Parliament.

**Aug. 29th** — Foundation stone laid for rebuilding programme in Leipzig.

**Oct. 7th** — Wilhelm Pieck re-elected President.

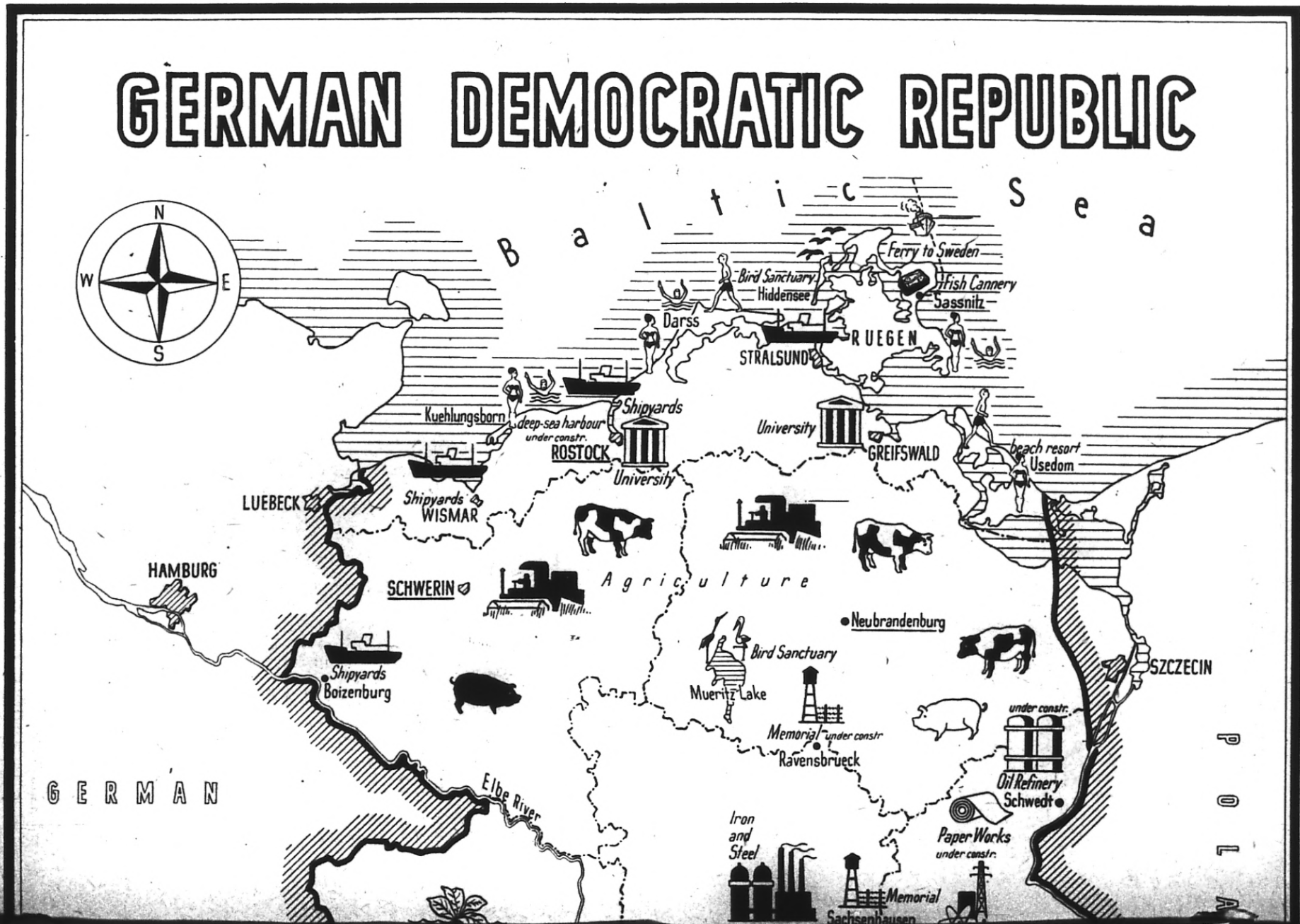
**Oct. 15th** — Income taxes cut, halving tax paid on average earnings.

**Oct. 26th** — Prices of 12,000 kinds of foods and consumer goods cut 10–50%.

**Nov. 14th–19th** — Festival week of music marked 125th anniversary of Franz Schubert's death.

**Nov. 25th** — GDR proposed negotiations with West Germany on trade, transport, police strength, weapons and stationing, and on exchange of publications, films and works of art. Not accepted.

**Dec. 17th** — Wage raises for large categories of workers.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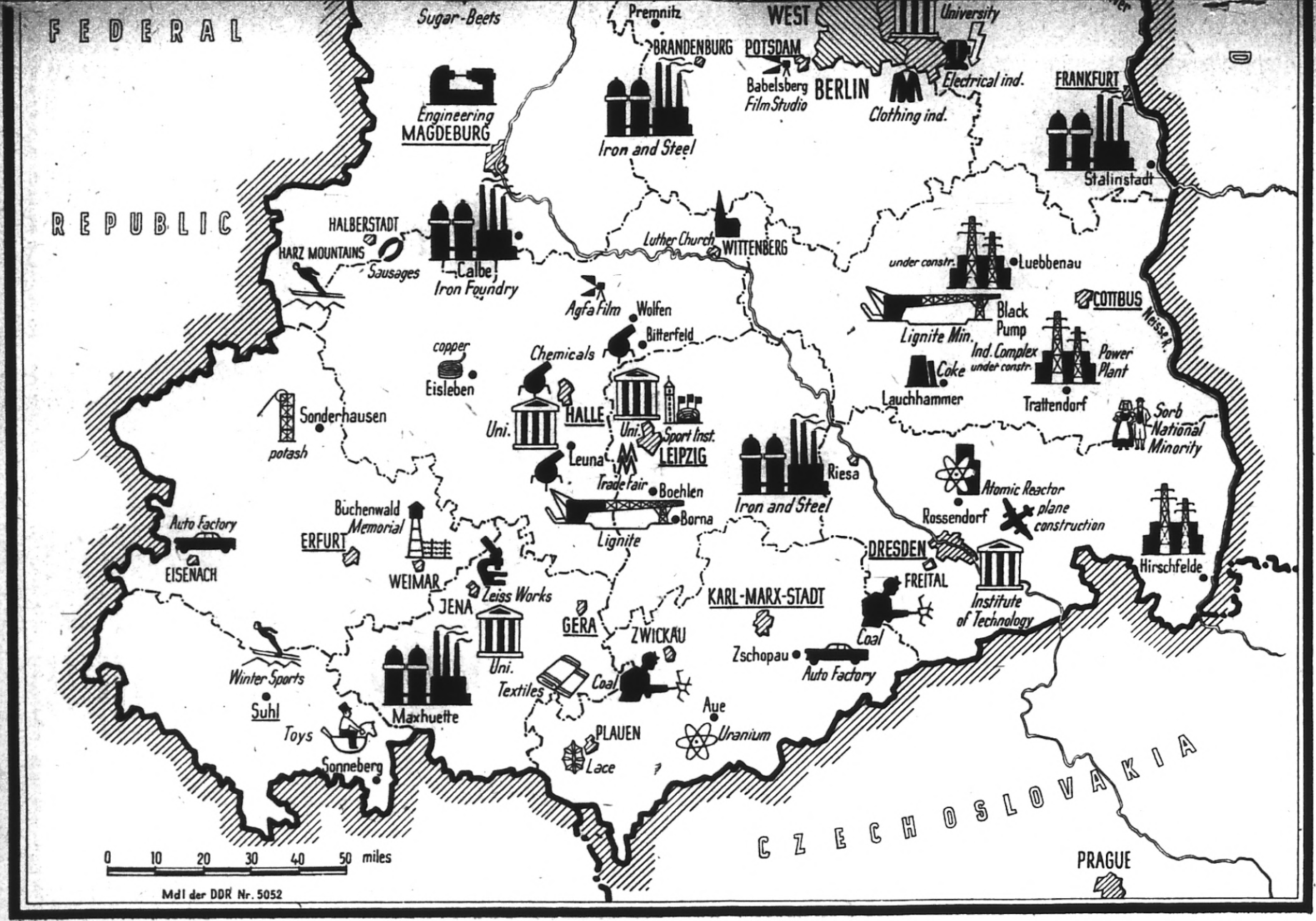
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# 1954

**Jan. 1st** – Return of the last 33 factories taken over by the USSR as reparations.
**Jan. 25th** – Four power conference in Berlin; western powers rejected participation of two German states proposed by GDR.
**Jan. 30th** – GDR submitted to Big Four Conference plan for peace treaty, all-German elections, withdrawal of occupation troops.
**Feb. 18th** – Berlin conference ended without result.
**Feb. 26th** – West German Parliament amended constitution to permit conscription.
**Mar. 4th** – GDR Cabinet announced that all West Germans who flee to GDR to escape conscription will be granted full citizenship.
**Mar. 27th** – Government of the GDR announced its full sovereignty in relations with all other countries including the Soviet Union and West Germany.
**Apr. 6th** – People's Chamber proposed that East and West German Parliaments join in calling for prohibition of weapons of mass destruction.
**June 1st** – Famous Danish writer Martin Andersen Nexö, 84, died in Dresden after spending last years in GDR.
**June 8th** – Price cut for bacon, biscuits, shoes, fish, cigars.
**June 15th** – Soviet High Commissar in Germany reduced staff, closed local offices in the counties of the GDR.
**June 27th–29th** – GDR plebiscite: 93 % voted for peace treaty, against West German rearmament.
**July 7th–11th** – All-German Evangelical Church Congress in Leipzig with 65,000 participants from both parts of Germany.
**Aug. 19th** – Cabinet announced plans for 27,000 new school places and increase of annual expenditure per pupil from 286 to 303 marks.
**Aug. 21st** – Karl-Franz Schmidt-Wittmack, MP from West German Christian Democratic Union, came to GDR in protest against remilitarisation plans.
**Aug. 30th** – French Parliament rejected European Defence Community plan.
**Sept. 3rd** – Price cuts for shoes, hosiery, fats, sweets, razor blades and postal rates.
**Sept. 19th** – Parliament proposed programme for all-German talks; European and German security measures, peace treaty, no military treaties, ban on A-bomb, no rearming.
**Oct. 6th** – Soviet Union proposed Four Power agreement to withdraw occupation troops, hold all-German free elections and all-German discussions on contacts.
**Oct. 16th** – GDR agreed with India on permanent trade missions in India, trade exchanges and technical aid for India.
**Oct. 17th** – Election returned 400 representatives to Parliament including 214 workers and 53 peasants.

**Harvest-time day nursery in a village**

# WOMEN AND CHILDREN

**Berlin, December 31st 1954; The number of day nurseries for children below three years of age rose from 873 to 1312 in 1954, statistics showed.**

Every possible help and advantage is granted women and children in the German Democratic Republic, in a clean break from the tradition that women's place was only in the home and that children should be trained to Prussian-style obedience.

Today women are encouraged to do all jobs in all fields (except heavy or unhealthy jobs), are guaranteed equal pay and given full opportunity to qualify for higher posts. Women have taken over new responsibilities in industry and government all the way up to the level of Minister.

Certain measures besides equal pay were necessary, however. All women with families are given one paid day off every month to do household chores, for example. Almost all factories of any size have their own stores, where employees can do their shopping during the work day, and provide laundry and clothes repair facilities.

Mothers also receive special advantages. These include five weeks paid vacation before and six weeks after childbirth, and special grants ranging from 500 marks for the first up to 1000 marks for the fifth child. These sums are not paid in lump sums, but in installments to the mothers when they visit the health centres for examination during pregnancy and the child's infancy. Thus an effective health check is possible, which reduces greatly the problems of difficult births and infant sickness and mortality.

For expectant mothers not in the best of health, there are 18 special homes where they can relax and recuperate for four weeks before the baby comes.

For those women who continue working after they have children, there is a wide network of nurseries and kindergartens. In 1958, there were 2,083 nurseries with places for 65,883 babies and toddlers and 7,521 kindergartens with provision for 295,000 children of three years and older.

For school-age children there are places where they can play and do their home-work under adult supervision until their parents return from work.

The schools, constantly being expanded and improved, provide a very ambitious course of studies for eight years and, in an increasing number of schools, for ten years. In 1957 (the latest figures available) each class averaged 26 children, compared with 35 in West Germany. "One class" country schools have almost vanished: their number dropped from 1407 in 1949 to 23 in 1958. (In West Germany, their number rose from 5544 (1950) to 8362 (1956).)

Country-wide schemes have made it possible for all children to spend summer vacations in the country — for the nominal price of one mark a day.

All these changes, plus the all-inclusive medical insurance, the disappearance of unemployment, and the encouragement for all to continue their education, means happy, healthy children and a growing participation of women in all fields of work and life.

# CULTURE

**Berlin, September 4th 1955; Berlin's historic Opera House, almost totally destroyed in a war-time air raid, reopened today with a performance of Richard Wagner's "Meistersinger".**

The rebuilt Opera House in East Berlin was perhaps the most important of all the many theatres and opera houses which have been built or reconstructed in the GDR. All together, there are now about 90 live theatres, new and old. Of these, nine are in East Berlin — including the theatre of the Berliner Ensemble, specialising in Bertolt Brecht and judged one of the best dramatic companies in the world and the Comic Opera, whose staging and singing have won acclaim all over Europe.

Almost every county seat and district capital, even if it has less than 20,000 inhabitants, has at least one theatre with its own ensemble, often producing plays, operas and operettas alternately with three regular casts.

Every attempt is made to find ever-wider audience circles. One method is through subscriptions — in fact, about 60% of all tickets are sold to subscribers, who usually visit the theatre once a month at greatly reduced prices. And more than a quarter of all live performances in the GDR are guest performances in factories or very small towns. There is also regular bus service in many villages which takes theatre-goers to and from the nearest theatre in town.

Other theatres are specifically for audiences of children — friends of the drama are thus won early in life.

In all, almost 18,000,000 opera and theatre tickets are sold a year; a better than one-visit-per-inhabitant average which any country in the world could be proud of.

What about the cinema? In May 1946 the film production organisation "DEFA" was founded in Potsdam-Babelsberg. At present it produces almost 30 feature films a year, plus a large number of documentaries, puppet, animated and silhouette films and the only newsreel in the world to appear twice a week.

Its first film, "The Murderers Are Amongst Us", was a world success; also many of the later films exposing nazism and its brutality were especially good — this year the film "Stars", a co-production with Bulgaria, won a special prize at Cannes. Many of the historical and criminal films have also been first-rate. In light and humourous films DEFA is still lagging, however.

Very many films are imported and dubbed in German, just over half of them from the socialist countries. Amongst those from western countries, the ones from Britain, France and Italy have been particularly popular.

Almost 100 symphony and theatre orchestras provide classical and serious modern music and are trying to awaken large-scale interest for music among the people — rather more difficult than with the theatre. Music festivals to commemorate anniversaries of Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Handel and other composers have been perhaps the most successful method.

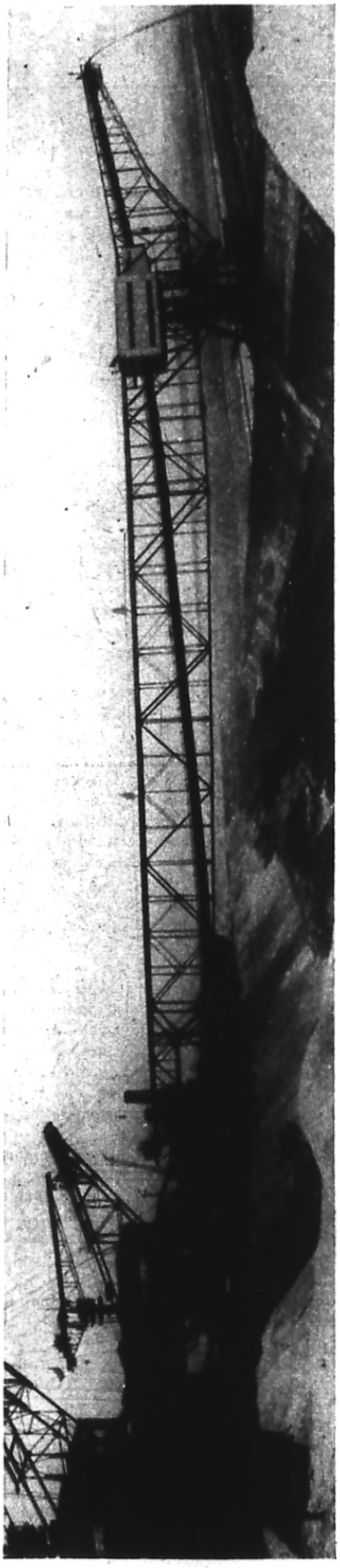
There has been great success here in regards to book publishing — many new libraries have been opened, especially in villages and factories — which has meant thousands of new readers. In 1957, 1,888,000 city and village library members borrowed 31,670,000 books. Translations of foreign authors, from Shakespeare and Dostoievski to Hemingway and Graham Greene, are very popular. A total of 97,560,000 books (10,203 titles) was printed in 1958.

Artists from the GDR — orchestras, choirs, opera and drama ensembles — have also scored great successes in other countries, visiting France, Britain, Latin America, Italy and many other lands in East and West. More and more, the GDR is adding international successes to its domestic achievements in the field of culture and art.

**The Comic Opera, Berlin**

## 1955

**Jan. 13th** – People's Chamber appealed to the Parliaments of Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark and France to prevent West German re-armament.
**Jan. 25th** – State of war between Germany and the USSR officially ended by Supreme Soviet, later by all other socialist countries.
**Feb. 15th** – GDR approved UN convention on women's political rights and convention against genocide.
**Feb. 27th** – West German Parliament approved Paris treaties opening the way for new Wehrmacht.
**Mar. 31st** – USSR returned 750 old masters saved from destruction after the war to the Dresden Galleries.
**Apr. 27th** – "Deutsche Lufthansa" established as GDR civil airline.
**May 2nd–17th** – 8th International Peace Race won by GDR's Gustav Adolf Schur.
**May 9th** – Paris NATO Conference accepted West Germany in NATO.
**May 14th** – The 150th anniversary of the death of Friedrich Schiller celebrated in Weimar with a speech by famous writer Thomas Mann.
**May 14th** – European socialist countries, including GDR, signed Warsaw Treaty for mutual defence.
**June 18th** – International Olympic Committee recognised GDR's Olympic Committee as provisional member.
**July 2nd** – Large new zoo opened in East Berlin – built and stocked by voluntary labour and with contributions of Berliners.
**July 18th–23rd** – Summit Conference in Geneva on German and other problems.
**Aug. 4th** – GDR Trade Mission opened office in Rangoon, Burma.
**Sept. 20th** – GDR signed treaty with the USSR providing for fully independent decisions of the GDR in all domestic and foreign questions, for GDR control of all borders except in regard to movements of the troops and supplies of France, Britain and USA between West Germany and West Berlin.
**Oct. 27th** – Foreign Ministers' Conference in Geneva.
**Nov. 1st** – The GDR opened a Chamber for Foreign Trade in Amsterdam.
**Nov. 10th** – Cabinet decided on measures for developing peaceful use of atomic energy.
**Nov. 16th** – Egypt decided to open a trade mission with consular rights in East Berlin.
**Nov. 22nd** – Faculty of Nuclear Technology opened at Dresden Technical Institute.
**Dec. 1st** – West Germany temporarily withdrew its Ambassador in Egypt because of consular mission agreement with GDR.
**Dec. 10th** – West German Government announced it would break relations with all countries recognising the GDR.



# COAL AND POWER

**Cottbus County, June 27th 1956; Work began on the construction of the world's largest soft-coal (lignite) project at the "Black Pump".**

All over Leipzig, Halle and Cottbus Counties are huge open-cast mines with immense excavators for obtaining lignite, upon which Democratic Germany is almost completely dependent for power, for fuel and for its important chemical industry; this dependence is caused by the lack of much water power, oil or hard coal.

In 1936, 97 million tons of lignite were mined in this area; today, Democratic Germany excavates annually about 215 million metric tons, 41% of total world production, and the amount is rapidly increasing.

But supply is always chasing the steadily increasing demand and although the problem of supplying electricity to private homes was finally completely solved in 1954, the factories demand ever more power.

And so new mines are constantly being excavated and new power plants built: Trattendorf, Berzdorf, Hirschfelde and the two giants, Vetschau and Luebbenau which, when completed, will produce more power than the Netherlands and Luxembourg combined. All of these are based on the soft, damp, only partially petrified lignite.

The biggest project of all is "Black Pump", whose four open-cast mines will yield 100,000 tons of lignite daily; the project will help appreciably in supplying electricity, coke, chemicals, gas and plastics to the factories and consumers of the country.

On May 1st 1959 the first coal was mined and processed here and then brought in the form of briquettes to the Berlin May Day demonstration as a symbolic present for the people of the Republic.

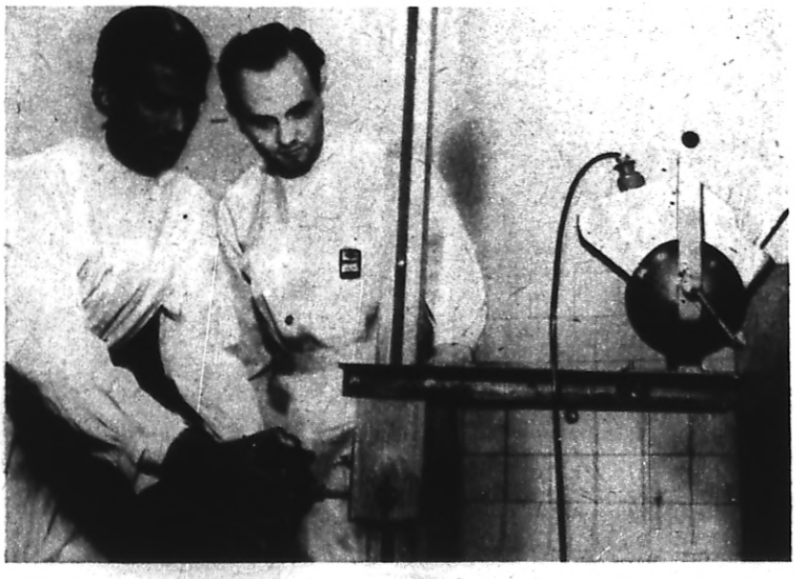
But other plans are afoot in the field of fuels. Work has already begun on a large oil refinery in Schwedt on the Oder River — here oil from the Volga area will be pumped in across Poland and will provide the basis for cheaper and better fuel and also for a brand-new petrochemical industry, something quite indispensable to a modern industrial country of any size.

Another project points even more dramatically to the future. An atomic power plant is being built not far from Berlin. Begun in 1957 and located and constructed with all possible safety precautions, it is scheduled to begin its production of power — 70 Megawatts — in 1960. This new source of power, when developed on a large scale, should end all power worries.

## 1956

**Jan. 14th** – First 10,000 ton freighter launched in Warnow Shipyards.
**Jan. 18th** – GDR established People's Army on voluntary basis. Not to receive more than 3% of budget.
**Feb. 4th** – GDR Airline Lufthansa opened its first international service (Berlin–Warsaw).
**Feb. 15th** – Trade Unions took over administration of social security and health insurance.
**Mar. 26th** – GDR joined other socialist countries in founding United Institute for Nuclear Research.
**Apr. 22nd** – Tunnel dug by American espionage forces from West Berlin into East Berlin to tap GDR telephone lines was discovered.
**Apr. 26th** – Government delegation left to visit Egypt, Syria, Sudan and Lebanon.
**June 4th** – Prices of clothing, household equipment, radios, bicycles, cameras cut 20%–60%.
**June 14th** – 33,000 Soviet troops withdrawn from GDR.
**July 15th** – Country-wide commemorations of 20th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War.
**July 24th** – Conscription introduced in West Germany.
**Aug. 14th** – Bertolt Brecht, world renowned dramatist and poet, died in Berlin at the age of 58.
**Aug. 17th** – Communist Party banned in West Germany. Police raided offices and newspapers, arrested leaders.
**Aug. 27th** – East Berlin's "Berliner Ensemble" theatre company performed in London.
**Oct. 1st** – Wage raises for one million lower-paid workers in country districts.
**Oct. 1st** – Installment buying on a wide range of articles introduced.
**Oct. 4th** – Representatives of West Germany's Free Democratic Party and the Liberal Democratic Party of the GDR met officially for discussions in Weimar.
**Nov. 2nd** – Cabinet condemned the attack of Britain, France and Israel on Egypt in the Suez Canal dispute.
**Nov. 11th** – Large rally in East Berlin in memory of the victims of "Crystal Night" pogrom in 1938.
**Nov. 16th** – Old-age and disability pensions raised 30 marks monthly.
**Dec. 8th** – All-German Olympics Team won 4 Gold Medals, 10 in Silver and 6 in Bronze at Melbourne.

**This open-cast excavator was too wide for the page**



**Indian guest student works on isotopes**

# HIGHER EDUCATION

**Berlin, February 1st 1957; All tuition costs for universities and colleges were cancelled today. Attendance in the future is free for all students.**

Not only is tuition free. 94% of all students today receive stipends, averaging 180 marks a month for children of workers and peasants and 130 marks for the others, only excepting those whose parents earned more than 1000 marks a month. 30% of the students — the better ones — get 40 marks proficiency bonus each month and the best 10% get 80 marks extra. The students themselves decide who should get these bonuses.

Students also have other advantages which make life easier and cheaper — inexpensive meals, big reductions in train and tram fares and for theatre tickets and, for 23,000 luckier students, very low rents in the hostels (10—12 marks per month). All students also receive full free medical and dental care.

Today, 60% of the students are children of workers and peasants and 84% come from the families of white-collar workers, engineers and other professionals.

There were 92,000 college and university students in the GDR in 1957—1958, including 18,000 taking correspondence courses and 6,300 at Worker and Peasant Faculties.

The latter are special college departments for young people without a secondary education who have been delegated to study by their factories or cooperative farms. After receiving their high school diplomas (in three years) they go on to regular courses.

There are 6 universities in the GDR — Berlin, Leipzig, Halle, Jena, Rostock and Greifswald — and 40 other institutes of higher learning, including the famous Dresden Technical Institute and the Leipzig Institute of Sport, both with the best of modern equipment.

Recently, a new system has been introduced to higher education; prospective students work for one year on farms or in factories before beginning studies. They are then more mature, usually study better and have a better idea of the field they wish to enter. This also tends to counteract certain tendencies of aloofness and snobbishness among some students who knew no financial worries and hence tended to lose contact with the working people who made their studies possible. Of course, they earn regular pay during this year.

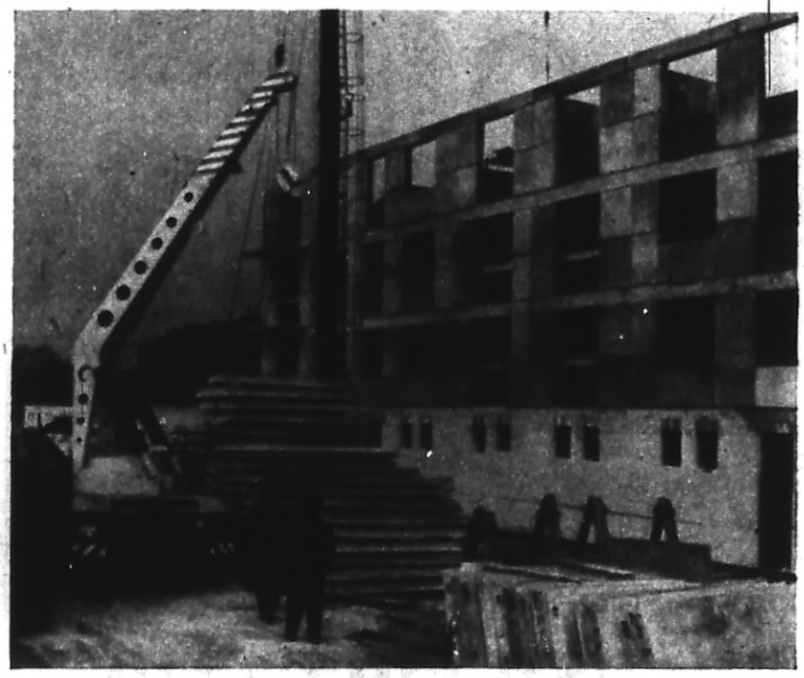
The GDR is also developing a student exchange programme with other countries, especially the socialist ones. Many German students study abroad and an increasing number of foreign students (in 1958 it was 1700) come to the GDR, usually to learn German literature, language and history at first hand or to study technical subjects. Guests from China, North Korea and Viet Nam and ever more from Africa, the Near East, India and Latin America — plus a smattering from western Europe — enrich the constantly expanding higher education system in the German Democratic Republic.

## 1957

**Jan. 17th** – People's Chamber passed law increasing rights and duties of local organs of government.
**Jan. 18th** – People's Chamber passed law cutting work week to 45 hours without reduction in pay.
**Jan. 21st** – First 100,000 West German conscripts called up.
**Feb. 1st** – Socialist Unity party tabled 3-step programme of German reunification:
1) West Germany should leave NATO and end monopoly rule;
2) All-German Council should be formed by two German states;
3) All-German elections.
**Mar. 22nd** – Chancellor Adenauer announced plans to arm West German Wehrmacht with atomic weapons.
**Apr. 3rd** – General Hans Speidel, former Hitler general, took command of NATO Central Europe Troops.
**Apr. 12th** – 18 leading West German atomic scientists protested in Goettingen against atomic arms for West German army; pledged refusal to work on nuclear weapons.
**June 16th** – Internal GDR airlines opened operations.
**June 28th** – West German Parliament allowed wearing of old nazi medals.
**July 27th** – GDR proposed a Confederation of both German states as the way to peace and reunification.
**Oct. 4th–15th** – World Trade Union Congress met in Leipzig.
**Oct. 6th** – GDR Government officially supported Rapacki Plan for atom-free zone in Central Europe.
**Oct. 7th** – Wilhelm Pieck reelected President by Parliament for another four years.
**Oct. 7th** – Work begun on the GDR's first atomic power station north of Berlin.
**Oct. 12th** – Algerian Red Crescent negotiated with Red Cross of GDR on aid for wounded Algerians.
**Oct. 14th** – One-time inmates of Sachsenhausen concentration camp decided to build there a museum of the European antifascist liberation struggle.
**Oct. 15th** – Yugoslavia and the GDR opened diplomatic relations.
**Oct. 19th** – West Germany severed relations with Yugoslavia because of its recognition of the GDR.
**Oct. 23rd** – Foundation stone laid for Luebbenau power plant, to be largest steam power plant in Europe.
**Oct. 26th** – Work begun on expansion of Rostock harbour to ocean-going ship capacity.
**Dec. 12th** – People's Chamber called on West German Parliament to support atom-free zone in Central Europe.
**Dec. 16th** – The first German atomic reactor began functioning in Rossendorf near Dresden.

# 1958

**Jan. 7th** – The Soviet Union announced the withdrawal of 41,000 more soldiers from the GDR.
**Feb. 11th** – People's Chamber passed law streamlining government, abolishing 8 industrial ministries.
**Mar. 25th** – West German Parliament approved atomic weapons for Wehrmacht.
**Apr. 17th** – The Free German Youth collected 500,000 marks to build concentration camp memorials.
**May 23rd** – Council of Mutual Economic Aid announced plans for great increase in cooperation and division of labour among the socialist countries including GDR.
**May 28th** – Rationing ended in GDR; children's allowances introduced, pensions, stipends, low wages raised.
**July 11th** – Soviet Union announced that all costs of stationing troops in the GDR would be cancelled.
**July 12th** – The first Baltic Sea Week began in Rostock with delegations and visitors from all Baltic nations.
**July 13th** – The western powers increased stationing costs for West Germany to 1,810,000,000 marks.
**July 16th** – Socialist Unity Party's Fifth Congress set target of overtaking West Germany in per capita production of almost all consumer goods by 1961.
**July 17th** – The GDR recognised new Republic of Iraq.
**Aug. 20th** – Oil pipe line from the Soviet Union to GDR announced.
**Sept. 5th** – Government proposed Big Four and two German states should work out terms of peace treaty with Germany.
**Sept. 14th** – Memorial at site of Buchenwald concentration camp unveiled before 80,000 German and foreign guests.
**Oct. 6th** – Price cut for shoes, leather goods, soaps, eggs, lard.
**Oct. 11th** – Johannes R. Becher, poet and Minister of Culture, died at the age of 67.
**Nov. 16th** – Elections returned coalition in People's Chamber and counties.
**Nov. 17th** – Trade and cultural agreement with Guinea signed.
**Nov. 27th** – The USSR announced that it would withdraw its troops from East Berlin in six months and proposed a Free City of West Berlin.
**Dec. 8th** – New Cabinet approved by People's Chamber. Upper House (Laender Kammer) dissolved.
**Dec. 13th** – The USSR proposed to all NATO members a non-aggression pact between NATO and Warsaw Treaty members, an atom-free zone in Central Europe and the reduction of foreign troops in Germany.
**Dec. 31st** – USA, Britain and France rejected Soviet proposals regarding West Berlin.



**Building houses with pre-fabricated blocks**

# HOUSING

**Berlin, February 26th 1958; Participants in a conference on questions of construction decided to set a goal of 100,000 new apartments every year.**

The war had left nearly every city in East Germany a shambles. Magdeburg, Chemnitz (now Karl Marx Stadt), Rostock, Potsdam, Leipzig — the central portions of all these cities were reduced to ruins. Berlin and Dresden had been hit the hardest. The latter was little more than a huge desert of rubble with occasional empty shells of buildings; homes, hospitals, museums, churches, schools were no more. A large number of smaller towns and many villages were also wrecked.

Before home construction could begin, it was necessary to get industry and transport going. Huge efforts were made, however, to clear the cities, repair damages and build wherever possible on a local basis.

By about 1950, large-scale building of homes began, although industrial construction remained as necessary as ever. Projects like the imposing Stalin Allee in Berlin were launched and things began to look up, although most people were still cramped into old buildings, often two families together in one flat.

But it soon became apparent that building methods were too slow. Laying one brick on top of another till a house is five storeys high takes months. So a new method was initiated — with large "blocks", two of which were one storey high. Things went much quicker and the results looked better, too.

At present, an even better system is coming into its own; large sections are used, with prefabricated plumbing, wiring, windows and doors. As capacities for making such sections increase, this system will play a great role. In 1960, the two new methods will account for 50% of all apartment construction and in 1965, for 80%.

An increasing number of homes are now being built by "workers' cooperatives". These groups, organised by the trade unions in the factories, finance their own home construction with the aid of interest-free government loans. They also help in the actual construction — doing the unskilled work or using their trade skills where possible. This helps solve the housing problem more quickly.

What about rents in the GDR? No rent increases have been allowed since the war, so that rent is usually under 10% of income. The rents in new buildings are also kept very low through government financing.

Almost 6,000 million marks are being spent by the government in the three years 1958—1960 — that means about 230,000 new homes. And then, in 1960, the goal of 100,000 homes a year will be reached and later surpassed, until finally the housing problem has been solved for good and all.

# TRADE

**Leipzig, March 10th 1959; Exhibitors from 49 countries showed their wares to more than half a million visitors from 73 countries at the Leipzig Spring Fair which closed today.**

The annual Trade Fairs in Leipzig — the Autumn Fairs for consumer goods and the Spring Fairs for industrial machinery as well — have grown immensely in size and importance since the first rather pathetic post-war fair in May 1946. By 1959 they were not only a trade bridge between East and West but a show-window for the German Democratic Republic as well, where all the world could see what had been produced and how far industry had developed.

The fairs are very important for Democratic Germany, since it is extremely dependent on foreign trade. Having few natural resources, it must import raw materials, process them, and then export the finished products in exchange for consumer goods and new raw materials.

Some main exports are machinery and industrial equipment, cameras and optical goods, chemicals, typewriters and musical instruments.

Imports include iron and steel, hard coal, cotton and wool, foodstuffs and leather.

Aside from its trade with the socialist countries, about 75% of the total, commercial connections have not been easy, because of embargo policies, discrimination provoked by West Germany, and the lack of diplomatic recognition by the capitalist countries. This has caused supply problems — the scarcity of oranges and bananas, for example.

One factor has improved this situation lately — the growing trade with many African and Asian states, which is of great mutual advantage since it is based on a fairly equal export-import balance. Thus cotton from Egypt, dates from Iraq and soon bananas from Guinea brighten wardrobes and diets in Democratic Germany.

However, much overseas trade has had to be loaded in Hamburg (West Germany) and carried in foreign ships. The resulting freight costs cut deeply into import quantities.

To solve this, a merchant fleet was needed. A series of shipyards were therefore built up almost from scratch on the Baltic seacoast. Several additional ships have also recently been purchased abroad, so that Democratic Germany now does a substantial amount of its trade with the Baltic area, the Mediterranean and even the Far East in its own ships.

The second part of the solution was to build a modern deep-sea port — the area chosen was Rostock, and the large harbour, begun in 1957, will soon be in use. Thus, another big problem is being solved.

The GDR's trade with the European socialist countries is planned and coordinated with the Council for Mutual Economic Aid, which agrees which country should specialise in which products, and so economise on unnecessary new investments. Hungary will specialise in buses, Rumania and the USSR in oil-boring equipment, Czechoslovakia and the GDR in coal excavators, and so forth. This enables all to move ahead more quickly.

But the GDR's trade with the capitalist countries has also been expanding — it trades at present with almost every country in the world. This means more consumer goods for the GDR and more jobs in other countries, and it adds as well to the good reputation of the GDR all over the world. Trade means contact — and so, whether it be a trade agreement with Britain or Indonesia — both sides gain and friendships increase. The role of the GDR in this peaceful process is growing and finding increasing recognition everywhere.

**"Friendship", first GDR freighter on the Far East run, ties up in Chinese port of Tsingtao**

## 1959

**Jan. 4th** – Government delegation led by Premier Grotewohl left for visits to United Arab Republic, Iraq, India, North Viet Nam and China.
**Jan. 10th** – Soviet Union submitted draft peace treaty for Germany.
**Jan. 17th** – Socialist Unity Party ruled that its full-time officials should do one month manual work annually.
**Jan. 25th** – Federation of British Industries signed agreement with GDR's Chamber of Foreign Trade for trade worth £ 7,000,000.
**Feb. 2nd** – Sugar, margarine and pastry prices cut.
**Feb. 19th** – Wage raise for teachers, miners and chemical workers.
**Mar. 1st** – Wage raise for bank, theatre, hospital and civic employees.
**Mar. 4th** – Khrushchov visited Leipzig Fair and Berlin.
**Mar. 26th** – Wage raise for postmen, health workers and workers in the food industries.
**Apr. 1st** – Cultural and scientific exchange agreement signed with Iraq.
**Apr. 9th** – Wage increases for construction workers.
**Apr. 14th** – 200th anniversary of Handel's death celebrated in GDR.
**Apr. 18th** – Wage raises for shop assistants and workers in light industry.
**May 1st** – Average 10 % increase in old-age, disability, widows' and orphans' pensions.
**May 11th** – Foreign Ministers' Conference opened in Geneva; delegations from GDR and West Germany seated at conference as advisers.
**May 13th** – Reuters opened first western news agency office in GDR.
**May 16th** – Parliamentary group from Colombia visited GDR.
**June 18th** – Health and social security service improved for blind, miners, disabled and hospitalised patients.
**June 19th** – GDR presented West Germany a draft for a non-aggression pact; West Germany ignored the proposal.

# BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By John Peet

This special issue of GERMAN REPORT will be the first number which many people have ever seen, so perhaps it would be a good thing to introduce the paper, and incidentally myself.

Every two weeks since January 1952, GERMAN REPORT has been carrying news about Germany to all parts of the world. I mean this literally; I have just been looking at our list of subscribers and as far as I can see the paper goes to every country I have ever heard of, with the exception of San Marino, Spain and Portugal.

We publish our paper in Berlin, the capital of the German Democratic Republic, and our aim can be defined very shortly: to tell the world the truth about Germany. This means, on the one hand, to point out the danger of developments in West Germany, where the old gang are back in power, and where Hitler's generals command a powerful army once again; and on the other hand to tell of the development, successes and problems of the German Democratic Republic, East Germany, where the old gang have been banished from power for ever, and where a new socialist Germany is being constructed.

And now to the autobiographical note: I am an Englishman, a Londoner, and I worked as a journalist in many parts of the world before being sent to Berlin in 1947 as correspondent for Reuters, the British news agency.

In June 1950, a few months after the birth of the German Democratic Republic, and when it became obvious to those in the know that the western powers were determined to re-arm West Germany, I came to live and work in the Democratic Republic, with the intention of doing whatever I could to warn of the recrudescence of German militarism in the west, and of the efforts being made to build a new and better Germany in the east.

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In the past few days I have been turning up the files of the British and American press for October 1949, to see what was written about the German Democratic Republic at the time of its birth. There was a lot of silly hate propaganda, but you can imagine that without me retailing it all over again: but what did rather surprise me was the very far-seeing comment made by the "Times", London, on October 8th, 1949, the day after the German Democratic Republic was formed. Here is an extract from the editorial in question:

"There is one way in which the formation of an east German régime may even be an advantage. It is at least possible that the east and west German governments will in the long run find it very much easier than the Russian and western authorities to find some modus vivendi between the two halves of Germany. They have already shown their readiness to reach a trade agreement and there is no reason why they should not be encouraged to go farther ..."

On October 15th 1949 the "Times" returned to the subject: "While, therefore, the western Powers need feel no particular alarm at the birth of the East German Republic, so long as they can avoid a new conflict over Berlin, it would be a mistake to believe that the new régime has no substance ... Instead of pretending that it does not exist it is wiser to recognise it for what it is — one more 'People's Democracy' ... imbued with a revolutionary toughness and persistence which may in the end produce results ..."

Which clearly shows that in 1949 there was someone sitting at the editorial desk in Printing House Square in London whose crystal ball was surprisingly unclouded. I regret to say that I have not kept any copies of the news dispatches which I filed to Reuters from Berlin during those exciting October days: I should like to know whether I foresaw the future development of the Democratic Republic as clearly as the anonymous "Times" editorialist. On second thought it is perhaps just as well that I have not got copies. My crystal ball may have had a flaw in the glass.

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This issue of GERMAN REPORT is perhaps a little on the heavy side, so let us finish up on a lighter note. A planned economy like that in the German Democratic Republic has many advantages, but it sometimes makes it a little difficult for off-beat undertakings. Here is an example: an enterprising firm in Leipzig recently developed a truly remarkable new item: a plastic cushion which could also be used as a shopping bag and as a watering can. (Yes, you read it right: watering can). Before marketing, the cushion-bag-can had to be submitted to local planning authorities so that a fair price could be fixed. The firm duly submitted it to the office responsible for cushions, and promptly got the answer "Not our pigeon". The same reply came from the offices responsible for shopping bags and watering cans. There the matter rests, according to latest intelligences. But perhaps the various offices concerned were pretty sensible, for quite candidly, did you ever feel the need for a shopping bag with which you could water your garden?

Of course, if the German Democratic Republic wants to earn some easy dollars, then the obvious course is to make up a few thousand of the cushion-bag-cans in mink, and advertise them in the "New Yorker" as gifts "for the girl who has everything".

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